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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [TU](#) [YI](#) [ZL](#)

SUBJECT: KOSOVO: TURKEY WELCOMES STEERING GROUP INVITATION

REF: STATE 12026

Classified By: Political Counselor Janice G. Weiner, reasons 1.4 b, d

¶1. (C) Both MFA Deputy Director General for Americas Ersin Ercin and Deputy Director General for Balkans and Western Europe Hasan Asan assured us that Turkey's early recognition for Kosovo's independence is certain. They described President Tadic's re-election in Serbia as positive, and hoped the post-declaration period can be managed. Asan expected Turkey to immediately follow U.S., UK, France, Germany, and Italy ("Quint") recognition, probably the very next day. He foresaw Turkey as being somewhere between the sixth and tenth country to recognize -- before most EU countries. The FM and Council of Ministers have been primed, he added. Asan emphasized that "Quint" recognition coming first will minimize Serbian reaction against smaller, regional countries, like Albania and Slovenia. Serbia, he said, has an "action plan" for every country in the region, but nothing for the powerful "Quint" countries. Asan noted that Turkey has advised Tirana to avoid such a reaction by not being the first to recognize.

¶2. (C) Asan noted the good cooperation Turkey shares with the "Quint" and gladly welcomed the invitation to participate in the International Steering Group (ISG), noting Turkey's similar participation in the Bosnia Peace Implementation Conference. Militarily, Turkey is already in Kosovo, and, he noted, Turkey is effectively Kosovo's number one trading partner when one factors in re-exported goods from Macedonia with which Turkey has a free-trade agreement. Kosovo also has a Turkish minority represented in its government. Politically, Turkey has not been fully engaged in the Kosovo process and Turkey's one million-strong ethnic Kosovar/Albanian community constitutes a formidable political force, which has pressured the government to become more active.

¶3. (C) Asan flagged a couple of issues concerning the upcoming independence declaration and the ISG. First, Turkey has advised Kosovo -- most recently during Kosovar President Sejdiu's February 6 "private" visit to Ankara -- to be very clear about what it is stating in its declaration. If the Kosovars refer to a transitional period, there might be confusion. Countries such as Russia and Serbia could argue they were recognizing a UNMIK transitional government as

opposed to full Kosovo independence. Second, he asked if there were any U.S. concerns about the International Civilian Representative (ICR) for Kosovo also wearing an EU hat when the EU lacks consensus over Kosovo's independence. He noted Turkey's presence on the ISG would help provide "balance"; so too would Swiss participation. Asan also noted the importance Turkey attaches to a donor conference being held for Kosovo soon after independence.

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